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I am Jim Natichioni of RightLivelihood.com and I have written the inspirational book: **Finding Your Path, Tales of Right Livelihood**. This excerpt is from Chapter Fifteen: “Emotional Maturity and Recapturing the Passion of Youth” and relates to using your emotions and energy as maps to self-discovery. To read more please visit RightLivelihood.com.

**Finding your path and right livelihood:** Without emotional maturity there is no right path and no fulfillment. To those who make a habit of storing and inappropriately venting their anger life is a vessel full of emotionally toxic wastes. We are pure and vibrant individuals capable of awesome creations not (progressively more competitive) human resources made to increase productivity and consumption of increasingly banal products. Slowing down our reactionary tendencies and simplifying and enhancing our relationship with nature are a few of the steps that can help. Anger can show us boundaries; where we have been and where we want to go can be a map that shows us the way. Emotional stability is balancing maturity with the adventurousness of youth. Experienced professionals who still have energy and passion will always be in demand. Examples of those who have succeeded because they display grace under pressure and equanimity with a smile are sprinkled throughout the chapter.

## **Emotional intelligence as the premier factor for success:**

Emotional intelligence is perhaps the highest factor of success. Emotional intelligence means *the intentional guidance of emotions, behavior and thoughts to work for you, not against you*. You can learn this kind of intelligence by monitoring, observing, and modifying your emotions. One of our strongest emotions is our desire to be useful. A blocked expression of that desire to contribute produces anger, frustration, and resentment. When you allow anger and negativity to sabotage your relationships and work, you have to ask what makes you do it, how do you feel afterwards, and how can you improve. Once you realize that your angst does not have an external source, but an internal one, your response can either cause or diffuse the problem. You have to make the decision to begin becoming an emotionally mature person.

## **Anger can be used as a map to show you the way:**

As a matter of fact, unlike apathy and sloth, anger can be a valuable source of inspiration. As my acupuncturist told me, too much fire can make a person edgy and angry, and I could use that fire to burn the old and fuel the new. Spiritual teacher Julia Cameron says that “we do everything with anger except listen to it” and if anything, anger needs to be listened to. Anger shouts: “listen to me there is a problem and we have to change.” Anger shows us our boundaries, where we have been and where we want to go. It is not hard to translate the message that our anger sends. For instance envy can be a map that shows us the way; I might come home after a rough work day and say, “That

boss of mine, I can't believe he is not paying me more for what I do," what this anger is really saying is, "he is doing what he loves and making plenty of money, stop procrastinating and take my own ideas and path more seriously."

### **A blocked expression of the desire to contribute leads to breakdown:**

**Hawkeye:** Four of my childhood friends were not very fortunate when it came to kicking bad habits and handling the years that followed the glory days of youth. They included Hawkeye, our high school basketball captain, Quinnie my neighbor, and star with the ladies, Farmer the states top gymnast, and Browzer the football captain. As high school warriors my friends fought their battles with courage. But after graduation they met a fearsome enemy called drug and alcohol abuse. They all stopped seeking a long time ago, but in their case it was not a good thing.

Hawkeye, about the coolest guy I knew in high school, was a very popular loner; the more he pushed people away the more they wanted to be around him. Somewhere between Springfield College and working for the Town of Framingham, he developed a habit. By the age of thirty, this awesome athlete had few teeth, shook like a leaf, and qualified for disability. One day I visited his sad apartment and offered to help, but Hawk just shook his head. He would put up with well meaning friends, but he would not tolerate pity. When I asked what he did all day he replied: "I drink about thirty cups of coffee and smoke four packs of cigarettes a day." "What do you think about?" I wondered aloud. "Nothing" he replied, as he sat at *the* only visible piece of furniture, a solitary table in the stark kitchen. I wanted to shout: "wake up and live!" but instead I stood to take leave of this sweet, gentle man. These incongruous words slipped out: "please make yourself comfortable, and I shall leave you alone with your thoughts." As the great environmentalist Ed Abbey said: 'Life is cruel but compared to what?'

**Hank Williams:** Did you ever see a robin weep, when leaves began to die. That means he's lost the will to live, I'm so lonesome I could cry. Hear that lonesome whippoorwill, he sounds too blue to fly. The midnight train is whining low, I'm so lonesome I could cry.

I think imbalance often results from not dealing appropriately with time; like Hawkeye having too much of it can be as devastating as not having enough. I know another fellow who inherited a fortune but spent his life hoarding the excess of his profligacy. Full of regrets that he had wasted his time on doing nothing of value and giving nothing in return for his good fortune, he contemplated suicide. Another man waited his whole life for retirement and when it came he did not know what to do with himself. He was miserable to the point of depression until his wife kicked him out of the house; fortunately this jump-started his retirement career as a volunteer.

When there is nothing to live for, there is no reason to live. They buried Hawkeye before his fortieth birthday. If not for the power of grace, there might have gone I. I have not been graced with the most talent like Hawk, or smarts like McSweeney or ambition like Hansen, but fortunately, tops amongst all of my blessings is Grace.

**Zen:** The Zen master used to labor with his pupils even at the age of eighty, trimming the gardens, cleaning the grounds, and pruning trees. The pupils felt sorry to

see the old teacher working so hard, but they knew he would not listen to their advice to stop, so they hid away his tools. That day the master did not eat. The next day he did not eat, nor the next. "He may be angry because we have hidden his tools," the pupils surmised. "We had better put them back." The day they did, the teacher was seen working and eating the same as before. In the evening he instructed them: "No work, no food."

**The Grand Master of Huashan:** If you don't work you don't eat, work and reward go hand in hand, through work and humility you know compassion.

**The complimentary values of maturity and youth:**

**High Horse:** Black Elk tells a story of High Horse, a young man who loves a beautiful Indian girl so much he can think of nothing else. He worries himself so sick over it that he almost dies. When he offers the girl's father first two, then four, horses, the father brushes him aside. He then tries twice to steal her from her parent's tepee but is again embarrassedly unsuccessful. Finally he decides to go on the warpath and steal a herd of horses from the enemy Crow's camp. He drives the wild stallions three straight days right into the village and right up to the girl's tepee. The old man did not wave High Horse away. Not that he cared about the number of horses, what he wanted was a son who was good for something, what he wanted was a son who was a real man.

**Peaceful Warrior:** "If experience alone brought wisdom and fulfillment, then elderly people would all be happy, enlightened masters." (Millman).

**Energy and experience and the passion of youth are still in demand:**

In High Horse's culture being a warrior equated to being worthwhile; in our society being a contributing member of society equates to work. Unfortunately as we age sometimes the world wears us down and breathing the passion of our youth into our work is the furthest thing from our minds. More than falling into bad habits the fate of Hawkeye and the boys was sealed when they lost the warrior spirit they had as youths. The question, "what do you want to be when you grow up" takes on a new meaning when you are middle aged and still haven't grown up yet. Often we have just as much to learn about finding our path at sixty as we did at six, but prefer not to. The lessons we learn teach us that regardless of how busy or bored we are, we must afford ourselves the luxury of spending time with what gives us true joy.

When I was younger, many things qualified such enjoyment: Christmas eve; little league; rush n' fumble, singing birds, climbing trees, snow forts, earning money and putting it in my shoe box, hockey skates and ski's, go-carts and bicycles...I could go on for pages but, as I sit here pecking away at keyboard letters, the feeling of what gives me bliss now in my mid-fifties eludes me. A sad thought enters my brain: "what happened along the way?" The next day I go out and take a long walk with my wife and nephews, Ollie and Ryan, to visit my special spot at the Lake Norman State Park. I remember. Joy.

**Dicky Fox** (from the movie Jerry McGuire): Hey... I don't have all the answers. In life, to be honest, I have failed as much as I have succeeded. But I love my life. I love my wife. And I wish you my kind of success.

Time is a non-renewable resource that we tend to use abusively. When we were young, our passions burned bright; as we age and our pilot lights begin to flicker, we become bored with 'things' that used to be wondrous to us. 'Things' like conk shells or grasshoppers did not exist only as names, but as awesome entities to be discovered. Business people in cooperate life that used to top off at fifty five are still in demand because they still possess what companies are looking for: the 2 E's, energy and experience. The employees easiest to push out the door are those who have grown bored, says Ed Kohler, president of a leading Manhattan recruitment firm.

As we mature we grow uneasy with the thought of fading quietly into the sunset, and look to recapture the awe of youth with anti-aging cream, Spandex, and Viagra, or by storing chi, yoga, breathing fresh air, and gardening. By not becoming stagnant, we can keep moving our energy toward our goals of vibrant longevity. If not for the wonder in our lives nothing would seem interesting, nothing would motivate us. Ask any amateur. Crowley was a high-powered attorney in New York, and his is a typical high-powered American solution to aging. Following I propose a more mellow approach.

***Merriment never grows old; even in retirement:***

**Last of the summer wine:** The world's longest running sit-com is about three old geezers in the winter of their lives that are savoring this time as if it were *The Summer*, when kids have fun outdoors playing silly games. Britain's oldest adolescents have no jobs and no wives; they live alone. They are outstanding testaments to the "positive benefits of being out of work" as they "drift contentedly through the gainfully employed world" amongst friendly blue-collar folks in the picturesque foundry town of Holmfirth. The frugal tight wards scrape together enough money to toast with a pint and celebrate life. The mischievous gang is free to roam the unspoiled Yorkshire dales and the local hangouts for the first time since school days, the breathtaking countryside making perfect backdrop for their incorrigible antics. There is the beauty in that: they do not sit around the house, they go outdoors and play.

Do not get caught up in the 'age trap.' Since 'The Boys' are as free as children, they act as if they never grew up. Kids generally trust their imagination and do not fear appearing ridiculous. The ability to not fear looking ridiculous is a requisite quality for a good salesperson, not to mention that this devil-may-care attitude might help today's fifty, sixty, seventy or eighty-year-old go out and do the work he or she loves. Lao tzu means Old Boy, and we can learn to be old children too; playful and eager, yet wise and enduring. Like children at play we can plunge into the life we imagine.

To 'The Boys,' something as innocent as a stroll in the park will inevitably turn into a madcap misadventure. They drive cars backwards into ponds; walk the moors conjuring up hair-brained schemes; ride tandem bicycles off cliffs; go rafting in sinking boats; tumble down steep hillsides to see if it feels the same as it once did...well, you get the picture. They are funny and happy and old, Campo, Clegg and Foggy are. They know nearly everyone in town, including a half dozen no-nonsense old gals who, along with the

rest, roll their eyes when they see these three scruffy but loveable characters coming. The music is enchanting and the scenery is bucolic, and it all takes me to a place I love to go, back to the simple pleasures of life. It is not a true story, but it could be. I wonder why we cannot be more like these guys.